

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-07 /125 W
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R 270802Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9921
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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USEEC
USMTN

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: EGEN, ASEAN, JA
SUBJECT: JAPAN-ASEAN RELATIONS

REF: (A) TOKYO 11515, (B) TOKYO 10171

1. SUMMARY. AS U.S.-ASEAN WASHINGTON MEETING APPROACHES, JAPAN-ASEAN RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE DEVELOPING QUIETLY ON SEVERAL FRONTS. JAPANESE GENERALLY APPEAR SATISFIED WITH STATE OF THEIR OWN ASEAN TIES, AND THEY WILL BE WATCHING CAREFULLY BOTH ATMOSPHERE AND SUBSTANCE OF WASHINGTON MEETING. WHILE WORKING TO ESTABLISH SOMETHING APPROXIMATING A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN, AND WHILE HOPING TO
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REMAIN EVEN WITH OR SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF U.S. IN DEVELOPMENT OF OUR RESPECTIVE APPROACHES, JAPANESE CONTINUE TO REGARD STRONG AND ACTIVE U.S. PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN INSURING PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF AREA. THEY WILL BE INTERESTED IN DETAILS OF U.S.-ASEAN DISCUSSIONS NEXT WEEK, AND IN IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR OWN ASEAN POLICIES OF ANY AGREEMENTS WHICH MAY EMERGE,

BUT MAIN THING THEY WILL HOPE TO SEE IS EVIDENCE OF SMOOTH DIALOGUE AND CONFIRMATION OF U.S. DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE PLAYING VITAL STABILIZING ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. END SUMMARY.

2. WASHINGTON-U.S. ASEAN MEETINGS APPEAR TO COME AT RATHER QUIET MOMENT IN JAPAN-ASEAN RELATIONSHIP. MAIN GOJ FOCUS NOW IS ON USHIBA TRIP TO ASEAN AREA TO "EXPLAIN" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

RESULTS OF BONN SUMMIT. VISIT IS REGARDED AS IN SENSE SUBSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN MINISTER SONODA'S EARLIER PLANNED TOUR OF ASEAN. (SONODA'S TRIP, ORIGINALLY SET FOR JUNE OR THEREABOUTS, HAS BECOME IMPOSSIBLE THIS SUMMER AS RESULT OF BONN SUMMIT, NEGOTIATING SCHEDULE FOR JAPAN-CHINA PFT, AND PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA'S VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST SCHEDULED FOR EARLY SEPTEMBER.)

3. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS, MOFA REGIONAL POLICY OFFICER EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH STATE OF JAPAN-ASEAN DIALOGUE (WHICH WE BELIEVE IS WIDELY SHARED IN GOJ), LAYING PARTICULAR STRESS ON SONODA ATTENDANCE AT JUNE ASEAN MINISTERIAL AS SUCCESSFUL FOLLOW-UP TO LAST YEAR'S FUKUDA TRIP. SONODA'S MEETINGS IN PATTAYA ALSO WERE DEEMED SIGNIFICANT WITHIN MOFA AS STEPS FORWARD IN DEVELOPMENT OF BROADER JAPANESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ROLE VIS-A-VIS ASEAN, ONE HAVING A MEANINGFUL POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC COMPONENT (REF A).

4. ON ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF JAPAN-ASEAN TIES, MOFA OFFICERS ASSERT THAT ASEAN IS PLEASED WITH LATEST IMPROVEMENTS IN JAPAN'S MTN OFFERS, ALTHOUGH THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THESE IMPROVEMENTS WERE MODEST. WE ARE TOLD THAT SOME NEW TRADE ISSUES WITH INDIVIDUAL ASEAN COUNTRIES ARE UNDER DISCUSSION; AN EXAMPLE IS SINGAPORE'S REQUEST FOR USE IN JAPANESE MARKET OF JIS STAMP OF APPROVAL ON SINGAPORE GOODS WHICH MEET THIS STANDARD.

5. WITH RESPECT TO STABEX, MOFA OFFICER SAID JAPAN-ASEAN EXPERTS' MEETING, WHICH HAD BEEN PLANNED FOR MAY, NOW PROBABLY WILL BE HELD IN LATE SEPTEMBER. HE ADDED IN AN ASIDE THAT MOFA ASIA BUREAU DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL NISHIYAMA RECENTLY HAD GAINED IMPRESSION IN WASHINGTON THAT U.S. POSITION ON STABEX WAS "NOT RIGID". EMBOFF REITERATED U.S. PREFERENCE FOR COMMODITY ARRANGEMENTS AS APPROPRIATE ON GLOBAL BASIS. (COMMENT: JAPANESE HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTING THE FAVORABLE VIEW THEY TOOK AT BONN

TOWARD A COMMON FUND LARGELY TO ASEAN'S LONG-STANDING
DESIRE FOR SOME EXPORT INCOME STABILIZATION ARRANGEMENT.)

6. ON ASEAN INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS, MOFA OFFICER NOTED THAT
JAPANESE GOVERNMENT SURVEY BY JICA (TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
AGENCY) HAD RESULTED IN FAVORABLE VERDICT ON PROPOSED
INDONESIAN UREA PROCESSING PROJECT. JAPANESE NOW ARE
CONSIDERING NEXT STEPS, HE SAID.

7. DISCUSSIONS ARE ALSO UNDER WAY, MOFA OFFICER SAID, TO
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ARRANGE FOR OPERATION OF PERMANENT ASEAN TRADE AND TOURISM
EXHIBITION HALL ON SIXTH FLOOR OF TOKYO WORLD IMPORT MART
(ONE FLOOR BELOW PLANNED U.S. TRADE CENTER FACILITY).
PRESENT THINKING IS THAT JAPAN WOULD BEAR 90 PCT OF THE
ASEAN EXHIBITION HALL COSTS.

8. WHILE PRIVATE JAPANESE INVESTMENT ACTIVITY IN ASEAN
RECENTLY HAS BEEN SLOW -- A CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH MOFA
ATTRIBUTES TO LASSITUDE OF BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN JAPAN
ITSELF -- MID-JULY TOKYO MEETING OF ASEAN AND JAPANESE

BUSINESSMEN PROVIDED EVIDENCE OF CONTINUING JAPANESE
INTEREST IN DOING BUSINESS WITH ASEAN. JAPANESE
PARTICIPANTS REPORTEDLY CALLED FOR JAPAN-ASEAN STABEX
ARRANGEMENT, AN EXAMPLE OF EAGERNESS WITHIN PRIVATE
SECTOR FOR GOJ TO KEEP ASEAN HAPPY AND THEREBY MAINTAIN
GOOD CLIMATE FOR PRIVATE JAPANESE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.
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9. ON ANOTHER FRONT, CONSULTATIONS WITHIN JAPANESE
GOVERNMENT HAVE BEGUN ON PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH, SOMEWHERE
IN ASEAN, A RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON ENERGY AND RESOURCES.
IDEA, WHICH ORIGINATED IN MITI, IS STILL AT EARLY STAGE
OF CONSIDERATION.

10. IN SUM, MOFA ASEAN-WATCHERS BELIEVE GOJ INITIATIVE
TOWARD SEA LAUNCHED LAST SUMMER IS HEALTHY AS IT NEARS
ITS FIRST BIRTHDAY. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT VIEW FROM ASEAN
OF JAPANESE ROLE MAY BE LESS COMPLIMENTARY IN SOME
RESPECTS, AND THERE IS SOME UNEASE AS TO WHETHER GOJ
WILL MANAGE TO DELIVER ECONOMIC BENEFITS WHICH ASEAN
WANTS; BUT THEY MAINTAIN THAT IN GENERAL JAPAN-ASEAN
DIALOGUE IS IN GOOD SHAPE, AND THAT JAPAN'S INFLUENCE
AND INTERESTS IN REGION HAVE BEEN ADVANCED. WHILE
ENDEAVORING TO ASSUME A MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL
ROLE, THE JAPANESE REMAIN ACUTELY SENSITIVE TO THE STATE
OF U.S.-ASEAN RELATIONS. THEY SEE THEIR FUNDAMENTAL
INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS ESSENTIALLY SIMILAR TO
OURS, AND WISH TO MAINTAIN BASICALLY PARALLEL APPROACHES
TOWARD REGION. WHILE PLEASED TO BE SOMEWHAT AHEAD OF
US IN DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAL DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN, THEY
DO NOT WANT TO BE TOO FAR OUT FRONT. FOR THESE REASONS
JAPANESE HOPE WASHINGTON MEETING RESULTS IN SIGNIFICANT
ADVANCEMENT OF OUR OWN DIALOGUE. THEY WILL ALSO HOPE
TO SEE EVIDENCE OF RENEWED AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO PLAY
ACTIVE AND MULTIFACETED ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHICH
THEY REGARD AS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO PEACE AND
PROGRESS OF REGION. THUS, GOJ WILL BE INTERESTED AND
SYMPATHETIC OBSERVER OF WASHINGTON MEETING. MANSFIELD

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